



Overview

The Millennium Declaration affirmed that democracy and democratic governance are essential for the success of the Post-2015 development framework. Democracy is a universal value aspired to by people around the world. Democracy is also an enabler of social and economic development, and a political system which can manage conflict peacefully. It is essential to anchor the new development agenda in democratic values and principles such as: citizen participation; responsive and accountable political institutions; inclusive political processes; equality among people; full respect for human rights; equal access to justice; and the rule of law. These principles contribute also to building peace in countries emerging from conflict, many of whom face the greatest challenges in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with a mission to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

Democracy and the Post-2015 development agenda

The various processes underway to define the new development framework after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire in 2015 have now coalesced around the global guiding principle of sustainable development. Yet, despite its fundamental significance for sustainable development, the place of democracy in this new framework is far from secure.

Various elements of democracy—such as rule of law, respect for human rights, accountability, transparency and effective governance—are recognized as important in the new framework. However, it is critical to remember that the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts: rule of law or effective governance without democracy are not going to deliver sustainable development which is responsive to people's human rights, needs and demands.

The human right of people to choose their own government, and to be equal in exercising that right, is lacking a place in the design of the new development agenda.

So, why does democracy matter in the Post-2015 development agenda?

Firstly, it's what people want. Democracy is a universal value aspired to by people everywhere—we see this repeatedly in people's calls for democracy around the world in very diverse countries. As a system in which the government is controlled by the people, and the people are equal in the exercise of that control, democracy is the system of government which best assures people's right to development. In a United Nations (UN) poll of almost one million people from more than 190 countries, 'honest and responsive government' is a top three priority for the Post-2015 development agenda (www.worldwewant2015.org/millionvoices). Honest and responsive government means that people need to

be able to choose their own government through elections with integrity, and that the voices of women and men need to be heard through democratic political processes, parliaments, political parties, civil society and the media.

Secondly, democratic political institutions enable sustainable development

The core principle of democracy—the human right of people to have a say in public decision making—is fundamental to sustainable development. Democracy allows the free flow of information and ideas necessary for an economy to develop. Crucially, democracy also enables people to hold their governments accountable. National democratic institutions provide an enabling environment for development which empowers people and in which states

can be responsive to their human rights, needs and demands. Democracy provides essential guarantees for economic and social development to take place, in addition to respect for the rule of law and human rights. Free and fair electoral processes, with elections held on a regular basis, ensure that governments remain responsive and accountable to the people. Great

societies. Democracy allows women and men to be active in shaping development policy priorities and to demand openness and responsiveness from their governments. And democratic political institutions are key to making women's voices heard and to allowing women to become decision makers on national and local development.



We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law.

UN Millenium Declaration (2000)

strides have been made in many countries to eradicate hunger and poverty under the current MDGs and to make such development sustainable, democratic political institutions and processes are essential.

Thirdly, democracy is the political system which allows inclusion and equality

While political dimensions are as important as the social, economic and environmental elements of sustainability, their role is not equally recognized within the policy debate on sustainable development. Democracy provides frameworks and processes in which all people can be included in making decisions about development choices which contribute to sustainable development. Democracy can facilitate the equal contribution of all sectors of society to issues such as natural resource management, which is essential for sustainable development. Democracy opens up space for people to participate in, and define, the development agenda. Democratic dialogue is also essential for rebuilding the social fabric of post-conflict

Finally, democracy best ensures accountability, transparency and rule of law

Although far from perfect, democracy is the system of governance which offers the best tools to fight against corruption, poverty and inequality. A shift towards more *open and accountable institutions* is essential for development according to the report of the *High-Level Panel on the MDGs*. And the UN Secretary-General, in his report on the MDGs and the way forward from July 2013, notes that *transparency and accountability are powerful tools for ensuring people's involvement in policymaking and their oversight of the use of public resources, including to prevent waste and corruption*. Indeed, the role of democracy has been recognized implicitly by all of the major reports presented to date on the Post-2015 development framework, although they have, without exception, shied away from the explicit use of the word 'democracy'. The mutually reinforcing nature of democracy, development, human rights and peace means that democracy and democratic principles are fundamental to the success of the new Post-2015 development framework. ■

Monitoring progress

Since the MDGs were developed, huge strides have been made on measuring key dimensions of democracy and democratic governance. Indicators have been developed to measure progress on democracy and have enabled countries to monitor their own progress at national and local level. One of the central elements in monitoring any new set of goals could therefore be citizen led assessments of democracy.

Other resources

International IDEA at the UN: <<http://www.idea.int/un/>>

IDEA's work on democracy and development: <<http://www.idea.int/development/>>



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